



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

QUICK GUIDE: PREPARATION & PREVENTION OF COVID-19

3/26/2020

To date, there are no confirmed coronavirus cases in DOC. It is important to remember that DOC deals with the risk of infectious diseases every day and we do it well. But the reality is that our population is aging and compared to the general population far more likely to have serious underlying health conditions. While we are all still learning about the coronavirus, what we do know so far is that *these two populations are most at risk of falling ill from coronavirus*. To that end, the Department is working hard to make sure both inmates and staff are protected if a case of coronavirus is identified in a DOC facility.

Since February 2, 2020 DOC has been screening every inmate booked into a DOC facility for COVID-19. On February 3, 2020 the DOC Infectious Disease Response Team held its first tabletop exercise for coronavirus response and has been meeting at least weekly since that time. A clinical care guide for DOC medical staff has been in place since 2/27 and a full departmental response plan was drafted March 4. On March 23 the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued its [Interim Guidance on Management of Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) in Correctional and Detention Facilities](#). The Department was pleased to see that the safeguards already put in place in Alaska met the standards issued by the CDC.

Preparedness

Weekly meetings of DOC Infectious Disease Response Team

- Daily Interagency Preparedness Meetings
 - DHSS, DPS, National Guard, DOL, DEED
- Implemented a full DOC Response Plan
 - Screening at booking was revised to address travel history and identify symptoms
 - Measures for isolation
 - Levels of quarantine
 - Limitations for facility access
 - Inmate movement restrictions
 - Environmental cleaning standards for common areas & inmate housing/cells
 - Meal delivery and laundry services
 - Reporting process through Epidemiology
 - Release procedures for suspected and confirmed cases
- Stocked up on personal protective equipment such as mask, gloves, impermeable gowns and protective eyewear
- Identified additional vendors for hand sanitizers, disinfecting wipes and alternatives
- Coordinating distribution of and fit testing for N95 masks
- Coordinating with Office of Information Technology (OIT) to implement department-wide VPN access and telecommute equipment needed for those able to work from home
- Issued PPE guidelines to all staff
- Monitoring daily updates from the CDC and the WHO and updating plans and instructions accordingly

Preventative Measures

- Cancelled all visitation, tours and events (3/13/2020)
- Asked attorneys to communicate with their clients telephonically
- Restricted probation/parole field visits to only those for whom policy currently mandates (high risk and sex offenders) or those who are reported to be in violation status
- Modified probation/parole offender reporting to other methods such as phone-reporting, Skype or FaceTime
- Reduced number of UA testing to test only those offenders who are reported to be actively using or those who exhibit signs of use
- Authorized hiring additional inmate workers to assist in cleaning and disinfecting efforts
- Mandated all facilities install hand sanitizing stations.
- Restricting outside medical appointments to urgent and emergent only
- Suspended non-essential contract services and activities with groups of 10 or more
- Closed lobbies eliminated acceptance of cash bail and in person contributions to offender trust account funds.
- Suspended Interstate Compact Travel
- Begun entry point screenings for all institutional staff to prevent the introduction of the virus into the facilities.
- Suspended performing BRAACs until medically necessary

Education for Staff & Inmates

- Holding all-staff Town Hall meetings to ensure employees are informed and have avenues for questions
- Developed an instruction bulletin for medical and security staff
 - identification of symptoms
 - isolation of suspected cases
 - stopping the spread
- Created a detailed clinical care guide for medical staff
 - Risk assessment
 - Diagnostic algorithm
 - Treatment
- Provided supervisor guidance for staff who report to work with potential symptoms
- Distributed inmate education posters and informational handouts
- Developing COVID-19 awareness for inmate education
- Distributed COVID-19 information material to inmates with mental illness & cognitive disabilities
- Launched a DOC/COVID-19 Website for the public to stay informed about department efforts

Recent Initiatives

- Coordinated with phone vendor to provide two free phone calls per inmate per week during the visitation suspension
- Waived the copay for coronavirus related medical visits
- Implemented a sewing project where inmates sew protective masks and gowns to address the PPE shortage